

Aviation House
125 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 0300 123 1231
F 020 7421 6855
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



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Mrs D Roberts
Brockenhurst College
Lyndhurst Road
Brockenhurst
Hampshire
SO42 7ZE

Dear Mrs Roberts

Ofsted 2011–12 good practice survey programme: improving science in colleges

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff and students, during my visit on 6 and 7 April 2011 as part of our science survey.

The visit provided valuable information which will contribute to a national report. Published reports are likely to list the names of the contributors or contributing institutions but individuals and institutions will not be identified in the main text without their consent.

The evidence base included: meetings with senior managers, the heads of departments, technicians, teaching staff and students; observations of three lessons; discussions with students in and outside lessons; reviews of students' work; analysis of documentation; and a tour of the science department accommodation.

Features of good practice

- Students achieve high success rates in all advanced level courses, and make very good progress compared with their prior attainment. The achievement rates of A and B grade passes at A and AS level are high and a significant proportion of students progress to science-related courses at university.
- A very effective student tracking system allows teachers, tutors and managers to monitor the performance and progress of students well and to take appropriate action with any underperformance where necessary.
- The well-qualified teachers provide high standards of professional practice and have high expectations of their students. They show enthusiasm and

passion for their subjects and for the promotion of students' learning and understanding.

- Teachers use a variety of activities and questioning strategies well to ensure that students learn and develop good understanding of scientific concepts. Students speak particularly highly of the challenge and support that all their teachers provide for them to make good progress.
- Teachers use sample examination questions frequently, regularly and effectively to check understanding of the topic and, in particular, to ensure that students fully understand the vagaries of question formats and appropriate answering techniques.
- Students make good use of subject-specific workshops that provide effective support for them, especially in developing their mathematical skills if necessary.
- Information and communication technology is used well in lessons to support learning and enhance students' understanding of more difficult scientific concepts.
- The science departments are well-resourced, with effective technicians supporting teachers and students with good resources in well-managed accommodation.
- Very effective managers lead and motivate their staff well. Leaders and managers are challenging and supportive, and get the best out of staff and students through effective consultation and involvement.

Areas for development, which we discussed, include:

- ensuring that regular opportunities are available for, and used by, all staff to share examples of outstanding practice in all aspects of teaching and learning within the division and across the college
- assessing fully the viability of reintroducing vocational courses at advanced and intermediate levels
- developing further the resources on the virtual learning environment to enable students to extend their independent learning and research skills in preparation for higher education or employment.

I hope that these observations are useful as you continue to develop science provision.

As I explained previously, a copy of this letter will be sent to the relevant funding bodies and will be published on the Ofsted website. It may be used to inform decisions about any future inspection.

Yours sincerely

Nigel Fletcher
Her Majesty's Inspector